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would give rise to a conflict of interest on the part of the organization.

(v) Take affirmative action, including training and monitoring of accredited representatives, to ensure proper handling of claims. In establishing that it meets this requirement, an organization requesting recognition shall submit:

(A) A statement of the skills, training, and other qualifications of current paid or volunteer staff personnel for handling veterans' claims; and

(B) A plan for recruiting and training qualified claim representatives, including the number of hours of formal classroom instruction, the subjects to be taught, the period of on-the-job training, a schedule or timetable for training, the projected number of trainees for the first year, and the name(s) and qualifications of the individual(s) primarily responsible for the training.

(2) In addition, the organization requesting recognition shall supply:

(i) A statement that neither the organization nor its accredited representatives will charge or accept a fee or gratuity for service to a claimant and that the organization will not represent to the public that Department of Veterans Affairs recognition of the organization is for any purpose other than claimant representation; and

(ii) The names, titles, and addresses of officers and the official(s) authorized to certify representatives.

(e) *Recognition or denial.* Only the Secretary is authorized to recognize organizations. Notice of the Secretary's determination on a request for recognition will be sent to an organization within 90 days of receipt of all information to be supplied.

(f) *Requests for further information.* The Secretary or the Secretary's designee may request further information from any recognized organization, in-

cluding progress reports, updates, or verifications.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 5902)

(The Office of Management and Budget has approved the information collection requirements in this section under control number 2900-0439.)

[53 FR 52419, Dec. 28, 1988, as amended at 57 FR 33878, July 31, 1992; 68 FR 8544, Feb. 24, 2003]

§ 14.629 Requirements for accreditation of service organization representatives; agents; and attorneys.

The Regional Counsel of jurisdiction will resolve any question of current qualifications of a service organization representative, agent, or attorney. The claimant, the service organization representative, agent, or attorney, or an official of the organization for which such person acts, or a Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Service Center Manager may appeal such determination to the General Counsel.

(a) *Service Organization Representatives.* A recognized organization shall file with the Office of the General Counsel VA Form 21 (Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative) for each person it desires accredited as a representative of that organization. In recommending a person, the organization shall certify that the designee:

(1) Is of good character and reputation and has demonstrated an ability to represent claimants before the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(2) Is either a member in good standing or a paid employee of such organization working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually; is accredited and functioning as a representative of another recognized organization; or, in the case of a county veteran's service officer recommended by a recognized State organization, meets the following criteria:

(i) Is a paid employee of the county working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually;

(ii) Has successfully completed a course of training and an examination which have been approved by a Regional Counsel with jurisdiction for the State; and

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(iii) Will receive either regular supervision and monitoring or annual training to assure continued qualification as a representative in the claim process; and

(3) Is not employed in any civil or military department or agency of the United States.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 5902)

(b) *Agents.* (1) An individual desiring accreditation as an agent must establish that he or she is of good character and reputation and is qualified to render assistance to claimants in the presentation of their claim(s). An individual desiring accreditation as an agent must file a completed application with the Office of the General Counsel on VA Form 21a on which the applicant submits the following:

(i) His or her full name and business address;

(ii) Information concerning the applicant's military and civilian employment history (including character of military discharge, if applicable);

(iii) Information concerning representation provided by the applicant before any department, agency, or bureau of the Federal government;

(iv) Information concerning any criminal background of the applicant;

(v) Information concerning whether the applicant has ever been determined mentally incompetent or hospitalized as a result of a mental disease or disability, or is currently under treatment for a mental disease or disability;

(vi) Information concerning whether the applicant was previously accredited as a representative of a veterans service organization and, if so, whether that accreditation was terminated or suspended by or at the request of that organization;

(vii) The names, addresses, and phone numbers of three character references; and

(viii) Information relevant to whether or not the applicant has any physical limitations which would interfere with the completion of a comprehensive written examination administered under the supervision of a VA Regional Counsel.

(2) Applicants must achieve a score of 75 percent or more on a written examination administered by VA as a pre-

requisite to accreditation. No applicant shall be allowed to sit for the examination more than twice in any 6-month period.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 5904)

(c) *Attorneys.* (1) An attorney may represent a claimant upon submission of authorization as described in §14.631(a) or (b).

(2) If the claimant consents in writing, an attorney associated or affiliated with the claimant's attorney of record or employed by the same legal services office as the attorney of record may assist in the representation of the claimant.

(3) A legal intern, law student, or paralegal may not be independently accredited to represent claimants under this paragraph. A legal intern, law student, or certified paralegal may assist in the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of a claim, under the direct supervision of an attorney of record designated under §14.631(a) or (b), if the claimant's written consent is furnished to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such consent must specifically state that participation in all aspects of the claim by a legal intern, law student, or paralegal furnishing written authorization from the attorney of record is authorized. In addition, suitable authorization for access to the claimant's records must be provided in order for such an individual to participate. The supervising attorney must be present at any hearing in which a legal intern, law student, or paralegal participates. (See §20.606).

(4) Unless revoked by the claimant, consent provided under paragraph (c)(2) or paragraph (c)(3) of this section shall remain effective in the event the claimant's original attorney is replaced as attorney of record by another member of the same law firm or an attorney employed by the same legal services office.

NOTE TO §14.629: A legal intern, law student, paralegal, or veterans service organization support-staff person, working under the supervision of an individual designated under §14.631(a) as the claimant's representative, attorney, or agent, may qualify for read-only

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access to pertinent Veterans Benefits Administration automated claims records.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 5904)

(The Office of Management and Budget has approved the information collection requirements in this section under control numbers 2900–0018 and 2900–0605.)

[53 FR 52421, Dec. 28, 1988, as amended at 55 FR 38057, Sept. 17, 1990; 68 FR 8545, Feb. 24, 2003; 71 FR 28586, May 17, 2006]

§ 14.630 Authorization for a particular claim.

(a) Any person may be authorized to prepare, present, and prosecute one claim. A proper power of attorney, and a statement signed by the person and the claimant that no compensation will be charged or paid for the services, shall be filed with the office where the claim is presented. A signed writing, which may be in letter form, identifying the claimant and the type of benefit or relief sought, specifically authorizing a named individual to act as the claimant's representative, and further authorizing direct access to records pertinent to the claim, will be accepted as a power of attorney.

(b) Representation may be provided by an individual pursuant to this section one time only. An exception to this limitation may be granted by the General Counsel in unusual circumstances. Among the factors which may be considered in determining whether an exception will be granted are:

(1) The number of accredited representatives and claims agents operating in the claimant's geographic region;

(2) Whether the claimant has unsuccessfully sought representation from other sources;

(3) The nature and status of the claim; and

(4) Whether there exists unique circumstances which would render alternative representation inadequate.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 5903)

[68 FR 8546, Feb. 24, 2003]

§ 14.631 Powers of attorney.

(a) A power of attorney, executed on either Department of Veterans Affairs Form 21–22 (Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's

Representative) or Department of Veterans Affairs Form 22a (Appointment of Attorney or Agent as Claimant's Representative), is required to represent a claimant, except when representation is by an attorney who complies with paragraph (b) of this section or when representation by an individual is authorized under § 14.630. The power of attorney shall meet the following requirements:

(1) Contain signature by:

(i) The claimant, or

(ii) The claimant's guardian, or

(iii) In the case of an incompetent, minor, or otherwise incapacitated person without a guardian, the following in the order named—spouse, parent, other relative or friend (if interests are not adverse), or the director of the hospital in which the claimant is maintained; and

(2) Shall be presented to the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs office for filing in the veteran's claims folder.

(b) An attorney engaged by a client may state in a signed writing on his or her letterhead that the attorney is authorized to represent the claimant. This evidence of authorization shall be equivalent to an executed power of attorney and shall be presented to the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office that has jurisdiction over the claim for filing the claimant's claims folder.

(c) The Secretary may, for any purpose, treat a power of attorney naming as a claimant's representative an organization recognized under § 14.628, a particular office of such an organization, or an individual representative of such an organization as an appointment of the entire organization as the claimant's representative, unless the claimant specifically indicates in the power of attorney a desire to appoint only the individual representative. Such specific indication must be made in the space on the power-of-attorney form for designation of the representative and must use the word “only” with reference to the individual representative.

(d) An organization, representative, agent, or attorney named in a power of attorney executed pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section may decline to